Howbeit, the conversation with Simon tires me out rather quickly, as with all those who are anxious about their limits and fear going beyond them. I speak to him of Chopin; he replies that he sticks to Beethoven; of Dostoyevsky and he confesses to being too great an admirer of Goethe to follow him, any more than he does Ibsen.

Visit to the Federal Museum. Wonderful rooms; a porcelain stove that is prolonged on both sides into an armchair; understanding of comfort and intimacy, more skillfully arranged than I have seen anywhere else (I am speaking particularly of a sumptuous Renaissance hall and of the next one, so simple, with wainscoting of inlaid-work that would have delighted Theo).

Andermatt, 27 January

Here I am again in this land "that God created to be horrible" (Montesquieu). The admiration of mountains is an invention of Protestantism. Strange confusion on the part of brains incapable of art, between the lofty and the beautiful. Switzerland: a wonderful reservoir of energy; one has to go down how far? to find abandon and grace, laziness and voluptuousness again, without which neither art nor wine is possible. If of the tree the mountains make a fir, you can imagine what they can do with man. ^Esthetics and ethics of conifers. The fir and the palm tree: those two extremes.

29 January

E. P. has come to join us, together with a school friend . . . an Alsatian with glasses and a pointed nose. His intellectual poverty and lack of curiosity, which he hides under an air of disdain; mediocrity of his reactions; yet great kindness and decency; but as soon as you talk to him of anything but practical matters, particularly money matters, he has no more resonance than a wooden bell. As soon as his smile leaves him, his face looks glum and expresses nothing but boredom.

I spent two days of fog and snow up there, more becoming to the

landscape than the blue sky we had hoped to find after several weeks of rain. And, paradoxically, now we have a cloudless azure since Olten.

I am writing this in the train taking me back to Paris and to Em., who is ill and whom I am eager to see. Wonderful descent from Andermatt to Goschenen this morning; I was plunging into one of the circles of Dante's hell. The fog, frozen by the wind, covered with hoarfrost my cloak, my gloves, the coachman's blond lashes, and the tail of the horse, which looked like an enormous ostrich feather, as in one of Goya's *Proverbs.*

The little one could glimpse of the mountains and their wonderful romantic hideousness faded away immediately in a fantastic unreality*

Sensual pleasure in the strange, just as intense as in the desert when, on